JUNE 2022
AUSTRALIA
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HOW BIG CORPS KNOW WHO YOU ARE
FREE THE PRESS
JOURNALISTS MUST CHOOSE TRUTH OVER PROFIT
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A TALE OF ROBOTS, SEX & ICE CREAM!
SEXY AF!
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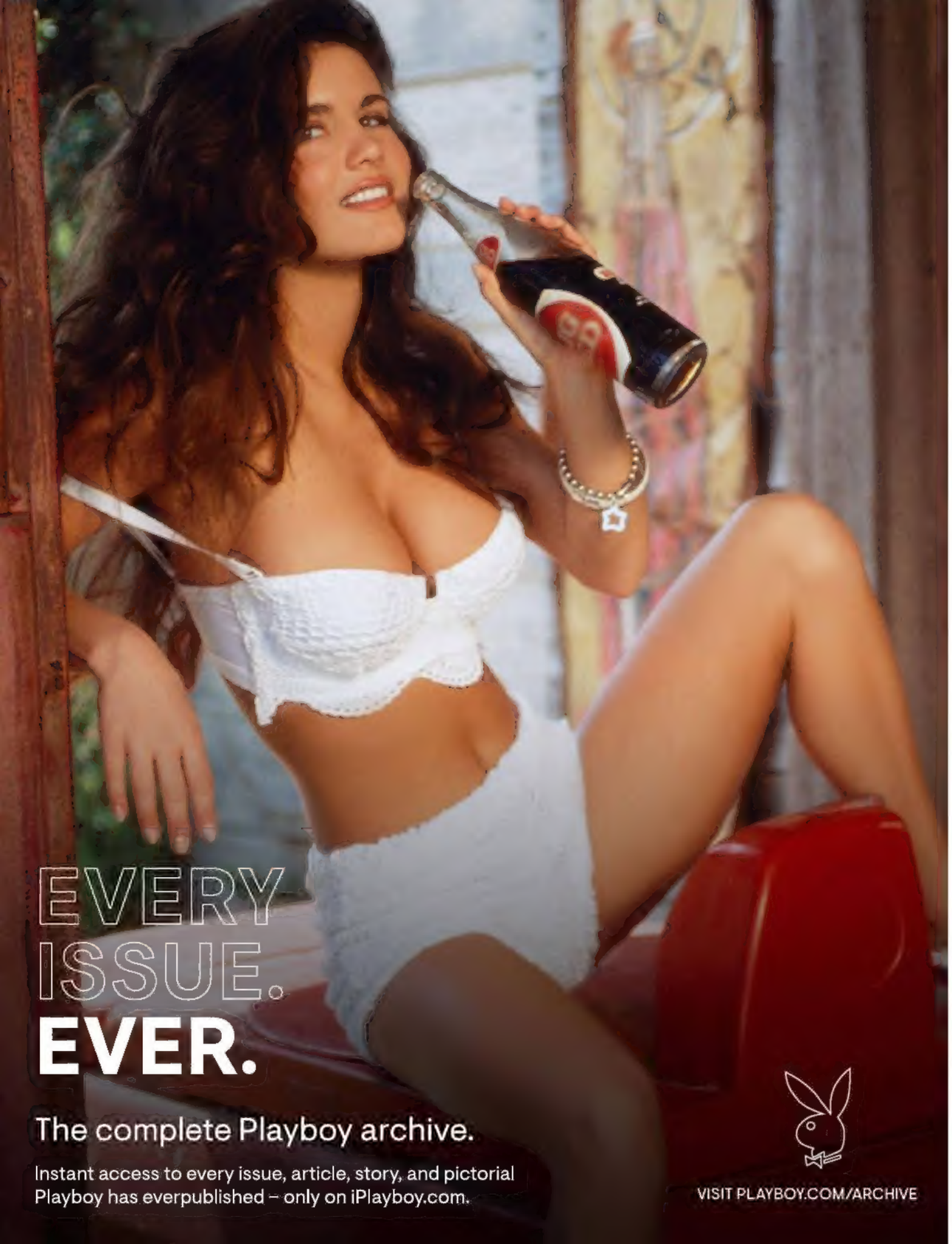

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Ending the American Pill Epidemic

Drug overdoses—more than 60 percent of which involve opioids—are the number one cause of accidental death in America. Dr. Sanjay Gupta wants us to ask ourselves: How did we get here, and how do we kick the habit?

BY **DR. SANJAY GUPTA**

PHOTO BY **KEIRNAN MONAGHAN AND THEO VAMVOUNAKIS**

Right around the time I was finishing my neurosurgery residency in 2000, the consumption of prescription pain pills, known as opioid analgesics, was growing at a staggering rate. Over the next decade, sales of these medications would quadruple and the United States would earn the dubious honor of becoming the most pain-medicated country in the world.

With less than five percent of the planet's population, we were consuming 80 percent of its opioids and 99 percent of its hydrocodone by the year 2010. In the wake of these pain-pill prescriptions came lethal overdoses—one every 19 minutes on average. By 2014, overdoses—61 percent of which involved opioids—were overtaking traffic fatalities as the number one cause of accidental death in the U.S. It was an American epidemic, and it was fully manmade.

"Nearly 40 percent of all Americans over the age of 65 take five or more medications, and every American fills 12 prescriptions a year on average."

We got here on a winding road paved with good intentions, as well as downright greedy ones. One thing is certain: There's plenty of blame to go around.

Our culture has become frighteningly accustomed to "a pill for every ill." Nearly 40 percent of all Americans over the age of 65 take five or more medications, and every American fills 12 prescriptions a year on average. Far too many of them are for pain pills.

Of course, many patients suffering chronic pain will read this and wince, worried that it represents another attempt to rob them of relief. That's not my intent. But pain pills weren't expected to be effective long-term, with most scientific studies lasting only three to four months. Additionally, most of my patients understand the concept of hyperalgesia: Sustained use of pain pills can make certain patients more sensitive to pain. As one escalates the doses, the hyperalgesia intensifies, as does the risk of overdose. The pain pills don't just become less effective; they can actually make things worse.

If that's the case, you may wonder, why do doctors prescribe so many of these pills? The charitable answer is that most doctors don't like saying no to their patients. The vast majority of my colleagues derive tremendous satisfaction from helping people, and doling out pills is sometimes part of that. The more typical reason, though, is likely that it's easier to write a prescription than to spend the time finding effective alternatives.

And then there's the tremendous cultural shift that took place in medicine during my surgical training, between 1993 and 2000. At first, I was taught to reserve opioid analgesics for three very specific indications: postoperative pain, cancer-related pain and pain at the end of life. Even in the field of neurosurgery, where we treat many pain-related disorders, we were taught to prescribe much more physical therapy and far fewer opioid analgesics. Over the years, I saw an increasing number of pharmaceutical advertisements in medical journals and guidelines from the American Pain Society—which is funded by pharmaceutical companies—making the case that long-term use of narcotics was safe for an ever-growing range of conditions.

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Dr. Sanjay Gupta, a practicing neurosurgeon, is CNN's chief medical correspondent.

KATIE NELSON

Instagram **@Playmatevikingqueen_katie**

Photography by **Allen Maness | @pephotography1**

Such an absolute honor to have you on Playboy! Talk to us about your career and what made you get into the industry? Thank you...so much for featuring me. It all started when I was approached by a photographer when I was 19 and it kinda just snowballed from there, I've been modeling for many years and became a Playboy Playmate in 2020. It's been a blessing to be able to work with so many companies, beautiful models, and incredible photographers over all these years.

What is at the top of your list to achieve the most this year? The top of the list is to become a recognizable International Playboy Photographer. Photography is my love, and my passion, and Playboy is and always will be an iconic platform for modeling. Playboy has always been a huge dream in my life. So, I want to give back and help make women's dreams come true. I recently had my first photography set published in Playboy and was ecstatic about this accomplishment.

What does it mean for you to be seen as a strong, intelligent, ambitious woman? It means everything to me. Beauty will fade, and We all become older but integrity, respect, and work ethic...stay with your character and reputation.

What would you say makes you stand out in the industry? There are beautiful women...Everywhere, so I know it's not based solely on looks. I'm a go-getter, do the work, and don't have a problem with doing anything myself or asking. I also believe it's the girl next door feel with an open book personality. Also Being kind and empathetic to everyone.

Where do you draw most of your strength from as a professional, career woman? Strength comes from being true to myself. I love what I do and When opportunities come my way, I take it. No matter how big or small it is. I've had many people give me a hard time about modeling and it sometimes being on the risqué side of things. Yet I never let it stop me. My thoughts were, am I hurting anyone?? Then why not. Also networking and making friends is the biggest joy of modeling in my opinion.

What are some of your biggest passions? My biggest passion is photography. Making women and men feel beautiful, capturing important moments in life and even breath-taking landscapes. Another is Designing and putting together creative concepts. Figuring out how to put a vision in my mind and bringing it to

reality s challenging and inv gorating.

3 ultimate deal-breakers when it comes to men? The number one is lying t seems to be a more common trait these days Being a feminine sign... I crave a strong dr ven, masc ne/alpha ma e A man who is not driven or dom nant s just not for me Party boys!!! Been there and done that. Lo Don't get me wrong Noth ng wrong about going out every once in a wh e, but I'm just at the point n life where wou d rather spend most of my nights in.

What are some of the things that attract you to a man? A man who can make me augh, wi steal my heart in a second!!!!! Make me gigg e. An inte ec-tua . To be ab e to have a conversation that's not surface eve is so refreshing Seduce my m nd. Peop e are most at tractive when they ta k about things, they are passionate about I ove isten ing to someone ta k about their goa s and what drives them.

Where do you see yourself in the next 5 years? Hopefu y Trave ing (A ot), Photographing everything A so Having my home paid off and another home n the mounta ns somewhere Poss bly owning a small business

What is the wrong way to approach you as an admirer? Just ta king about looks or sex. Lo . I get so many messages (t's insane) from men and some women just ta king about want ng to be n between my egs and what they wou d do to me, or me to them. t's nice to be de sired but an introduction is n ce before you start talking about me kick ng you in the groin or stepp ng on your balls in my heels lo (shaking my head) ask for what everyone asks for.. Respect

Where can our readers catch up with you and stay updated with your work? nstagram, Facebook, and Tiktok p ayMateTnkat e No Snapchat... tinder or whatever else. I apparent y have quite a bit of fake prof es out there so be care fu who you are ta k ng to. Lo

We are so happy to have gotten to know you a little bit! Any last words out there for our readers? Take as many opportunities as you can Be oving and kind Make friends and network Most importantly, Take care of and be there for the peop e who Truly love, support, and want the best for you

Fix the Police

BY NORM STAMPER

ILLUSTRATION BY BEN TURNBULL FOR PLAYBOY

Norm Stamper asks a burning question: From Ferguson to Freddie Gray—what the hell happened to America's cops?

In the minds of the Missouri police officers who, a year after Michael Brown's death, sought to celebrate the cop who killed him, policing does not need fixing. To the rest of America, the institution is badly broken and in desperate need of repair.

This is nothing new. From the time the first one was founded in the mid-19th century, police departments have been tainted by recurring spasms of corruption, brutality and racism—accompanied by escalating militarism.

Stories of police beneficence and courage—the cop who springs for new boots and warm socks for a homeless man on a bitterly cold night in Times Square, the officers who buy diapers or baby formula for impoverished shoplifters in Roswell, New Mexico (or in Kansas, Florida, Kentucky and many other places), the street cops who risk their lives to stop a shooter or to pull a suicidal woman from a freeway overpass—are important and deserve wide recognition.

But until we confront and change a system that allows the cold blooded murders of Walter Scott in North Charleston, South Carolina and Laquan McDonald in Chicago—and the attempted cover ups in both cities—we will find ourselves returning again and again to the question of how to assure ethical, compassionate and lawful policing.

The biggest barrier to this kind of police work is the paramilitary-bureaucratic structure and mentality of every law enforcement agency in the nation. It's a mentality that gets conveyed to the public as "We are the police, and you are not."

It's time America's police officers recognize they belong to the people, not the other way around. How do we accomplish this? Put simply, your local government must invite community participation in all aspects of police operations: recruitment and training, policy making, program development, crisis management and effective, credible citizen oversight of police performance and behavior. If that invitation doesn't arrive, the people—critics, grassroots activists, civic-minded supporters of public safety and neighborhood health—must demand a place at the table as full partners in local police operations.

A city or county that forges an honest community police partnership will soon realize the benefits of mutual trust and respect, enhanced crime fighting and neighborhood problem solving, fewer unarmed citizens dying at the hands of their police and, critically, improved officer safety and morale. With the exception of exigent circumstances that demand an armed response, officers will no longer make unilateral or arbitrary decisions. Partners don't have to agree all the time, but they do have to communicate, cooperate and support one another.

> **"It's time America's police officers recognize they belong to the people, not the other way around."**

Two additional steps can tremendously benefit community based policing. The first is to end the obscenely expensive, immoral and utterly ineffective war on drugs, a war that has made many citizens—including a disproportionate number of young, poor black and Latino Americans—the enemy of their local police. This pointless war has destroyed individual lives, fractured families, brought about mass incarceration and strained community-police relations beyond the breaking point.

The second step is to use the tens of billions of dollars saved by ending the war on drugs to support education and treatment for those in need and to establish a much needed federal accountability presence in local law enforcement.

There are about 18,000 police agencies in the U.S. and only one Constitution. Each of the country's more than 1 million law enforcement workers is legally obligated both to enforce and to abide by all provisions of this "secular Bible" of the land. Like it or not, when it comes to policing—from Ferguson to the NYPD—America is in need of more big government.

In order to ensure that local law enforcement abides by laws governing search and seizure, stop-and-frisk, use of force and free assembly protections, the Department of Justice must be given the authority and the resources to do three things. First, it needs to set reasonable, defensible standards of police performance and conduct. Second, it needs to certify every law enforcement officer and agency in the country. And third, it must be given the power to decertify, for just cause, any individual or department that refuses to play by the rules.

Imagine America's cops as defenders, not violators, of their fellow citizens' civil liberties, and work toward that. It's as doable as it is necessary.

Norm Stamper was a cop for 34 years and served as chief of the Seattle Police Department. He is the author of To Protect and Serve: How to Fix America's Police, out this June from Nation Books.

Free the Press

Imagine if the press in America were truly free—if journalism cost absolutely nothing to produce. What would reporting be like if it were unencumbered by the need to make profits, if a news operation's survival didn't depend on generating clicks, gaining subscriptions or depositing asses in front of TVs?

What if our media were also free of the greed for power—free of a corporate owner's desire to please a politician whose actions could affect the company's bottom line, of reporters who ask only friendly questions in order to retain access to the highest levels of power, of newsroom workers who have fixed their compasses on moving up at the expense of making a difference?

The American news media is driven by the pursuit of money and power—not the truth. Mary Mapes says it has to be fixed.

Would our stories be more aggressive and our questioning of politicians, of all stripes, more adversarial? Would more whistle-blowers be willing to step forward? Would newsrooms be more inclined to launch risky investigations, tackle difficult subjects and take on projects that require more time, manpower and money than they're able to commit now?

We all know the answers.

When I became a journalist, I didn't do it because I wanted to get rich quick, or even slowly. I did it because I believed I was joining a kind of church, a cult that worshipped curiosity and the First Amendment, whose members believed we were performing a public service integral to our way of life. We were there to represent all Americans, to be their eyes and ears, and to bring back to them the gritty details of how government really worked, how our leaders behaved behind closed doors and how our tax dollars were used.

"If our media universe were a restaurant, American news consumers would be undernourished."

That is what I believed profoundly when I took my job at CBS News in 1989. I lost that job almost 16 years later in a political firestorm triggered by corporate fear and partisan political attacks after Dan Rather and I broadcast a challenging 60 Minutes II story about the sketchy military record of then president George W. Bush.

What I didn't realize when we aired that story was that in the years between my first day at CBS and the day I was asked to leave the building and never come back, our media models had devolved into something much less than a fully free press. They'd become profit-first businesses built on the belief that freedom of the press simply wasn't worth the cost. That thinking has been behind the decades-long drive of corporate owners to cut corners in news coverage, lay off a generation of reporters and shutter news outlets that weren't meeting unrealistically high profit margins. At some point, profitability and the First Amendment became mutually exclusive.

Once upon a time, we had very few outlets for news and information. Now, though we seem to have more choices, it's a digital delusion. In 1983, 50 companies controlled 90 percent of our media. Over the next three decades, the Federal Communications Commission relaxed or eliminated multiple rules limiting media ownership. Today, thanks to consolidation, mega-mergers, hostile takeovers and financial hard times, the number of controlling companies is down to six. And those six companies—Comcast, Walt Disney, News Corp., Time Warner, Viacom and CBS—have made callow choices about what Americans should be able to see and learn about the world around us.

If our media universe were a restaurant, American news consumers would be undernourished. We exist on a steady diet of intellectual junk food—cotton candy, Cheez Whiz and chicken wings—with an occasional hunk of raw red meat thrown into the mix. Like children whose every meal is delivered through a car window, we're getting exactly what media executives think we want, not what they know we need—and not what we deserve.

That's why a blustering reality TV star has seemed to so many Americans a viable candidate to lead the country. And the media has facilitated Donald Trump, the Honey Boo Boo of Campaign 2016, by giving him free, unfiltered access to American audiences—not because he's brilliant but because he's ratings gold.

It's not as easy as it used to be to stay informed, but it's more important than ever before. That leaves the onus on American citizens to curate our own coverage, to serve as our own editors in compiling a go-to list of news sites, newspapers and television programs. We have to read international news and consider analysis from people with whom we fundamentally disagree. We have to try new things, such as journalistic start-ups that operate as nonprofits. We have to protect whistle-blowers, support websites and editors that rail against the status quo and champion reporters who regularly earn the wrath of the rich and powerful.

We all know the future of our news media is digital, but we aren't there yet—not by a long shot. We're still chimps in command of a jumbo jet cockpit, thrilled to be along for the ride but not quite sure where we're going or how to get there.

We can use our desktops as windows into the universe, our laptops to learn about the world and our smartphones to access the wisdom of the ages—or we can use them to take pictures of our genitals and text them to one another.

Maybe it's time we stopped dicking around.

Mary Mapes is a journalist, author and Peabody award–winning television news producer.

Living In Your Own Not-So-Private Bubble

It's said that information wants to be free—that, like life it will find a way to replicate itself and show up where you least expect or want it. Your information now has more ways than ever before to spread, from online backups to the private messages your ex girlfriend archived. But I can tell you this. My information absolutely does not want to be free. It wants to stay home and go out and play only when I give it permission.

Corporations are using vast stores of your personal data to reshape your every moment. And, as Jeff Moss argues, you're letting it happen

Storage space costs next to nothing, and everything you do is recorded forever. That porn site you visited is not just in your browser history, it's also in the logs of your internet service provider, the DNS server, the content distribution network, the ad network the site uses, Google Analytics and finally on the actual site you visited. Clearing your browser history only hides it from whoever else uses your devices. If I want to browse the internet, my information has to go out and play, whether I like it or not.

It's also said that we live in the "golden age of surveillance." Simply put, surveillance is when an intelligence or law enforcement agency listens in and records traffic, be it voice, data, telemetry, radio, whatever. This is what Edward Snowden revealed.

If we're talking freedom, though, I worry most about the collection that companies do on us. Have a mobile phone? Your location data is shared with "partners." Same with your medical records, home loan finances, social media pictures. Use any apps that have access to your address book? They just backed it up "for reference purposes."

> **"Think you have a right to privacy? You just gave it away in the terms of service you didn't read."**

This is society's cost of entry today. Companies must monetize everything about you to help fund their services—services we see as essential to participating in modern society. I can't pay Facebook R1,900.00 a year not to collect info about me, its platform doesn't work that way. In a Mobius strip of data, we're both the product and the consumer. Think you have a right to privacy? To paraphrase President Obama, "You don't own that." You just gave it away in the terms of service you didn't read.

The amount of data that companies have about you individually may not be much, but when data brokers aggregate hundreds of companies' collections, it ends up being way more detailed than what the NSA knows about you. These giant pools are used by advertisers, insurance companies, market researchers... basically anyone who can pay.

Going shopping? Malls, supermarkets and outdoor advertisers collect the MAC (media access control) addresses that your phone broadcasts and use them to track where you go and how long you stand in front of the cookies. It helps businesses optimize their inventory if they know where people linger. Don't like this? Don't use a Bluetooth headset, and turn off wi-fi.

It gets worse. Way worse. When the internet of things arrives, add to this list all the data your IOT devices will have on you: the shows, games and songs you enjoy, when you're home or away, how much energy you use compared with your neighbors, the food you prepare, where and when you drive, your health stats. Talk about your quantified self!

Marketers work hard to put you in a bubble. With their ever increasing understanding of your behavior and preferences, one of their end goals is to influence you at just the right moment with just the right offer. The more they can influence what you read or watch, the better they can do this.

Your bubble will be personalized to your tastes, like a constant mash-up of Amazon, Netflix and Facebook recommendations. It will steer you toward news stories and articles you're likely to agree with and enjoy (while viewing all the ads along the way). Your bubble will give you just the right amount of new discovery excitement along with your daily favorites while sharing only that which is in-network. Your bubble will be different from those of your friends, neighbors and bosses. In other words, your bubble will be an all-encompassing field of personalized content enabled by compulsory mass corporate surveillance.

Government didn't do this to us. The free market did. It costs nothing for an app developer or a company to add a terms-of-service clause giving it permission to collect your information. And all that data is such an attractive nuisance! The perverse thing is that spy agencies and prosecutors don't need to collect anymore, what they can't subpoena, they just buy.

What does freedom even mean in this context? The current debate about NSA bulk collection is important, but it's a side-show to what's really happening to our privacy and freedoms in a connected world. That will become clear when a whistle-blower of Snowden's caliber emerges from Facebook, Google or some other company that makes it their business to collect on all of us.

Cybersecurity expert Jeff Moss, a.k.a. the Dark Tangent, is founder of the event series Black Hat and the global hacker conference DEF CON.

Take Back the Political Map

Rewriting the rules of our broken electoral process will require more than rallies and hashtags according to Nirvana's Krist Novoselic

BY KRIST NOVOSELIC PHOTOGRAPH BY BENJAMIN CONSTANTINE

Every election season, we're urged to participate by voting. This works when candidates pull people in, but it's less than inspiring when people vote out of the fear that someone they don't like will be elected. We've all heard variations of the line "Vote because it's your duty," and while I agree, the real problem is the sucky choices we get on the ballot. The good news is that things don't have to be this way—at least not when it comes to Congress. We can pass election laws, without changing our Constitution, in a way that truly engages voters.

There's an uneasy silence when it comes to races for the House. I find that most people don't even know who represents them in the Capitol. If we stood in front of a supermarket with a picture of Justin Bieber and a picture of the local congressperson, I bet 19 out of 20 people wouldn't recognize the latter. This is not our fault. It's the result of the wall the House has built around itself.

I became involved in politics in the mid-1990s, working with others to fight music censorship on the local and state levels. Along the way I noticed how many elections were effectively uncontested, and I wanted to know why. The culprit is gerrymandering: political insiders drawing district lines that benefit them and the mainstream parties they work for. Nine out of 10 House races are in the "safe seat" column, in districts where the outcome is a foregone conclusion. This is why most people can't name their U.S. representative. The lack of competition is repellent.

We can fix that with a federal law that empowers independent commissions to redraw district lines so political elites can no longer manipulate elections. California voters passed such a law. The awesome power of redistricting was handed over to a citizens' commission, and the old district lines, custom made for politicians, were wiped off the map. What if we took it one step further so you and I could share in this power? What if voters could pick a candidate who inspired them and who had a chance at winning in a fair election?

There is a way.

The idea that a district should be represented by only one person has no constitutional basis and is flat-out wrong. The system stems from the Uniform Congressional District Act, a 1967 federal statute that resulted in a gerrymandered wall around the House. Prior to that law, many states allowed districts to elect multiple representatives. Unfortunately, political insiders manipulated the rules to disenfranchise racial minorities, making sure the white majority swept all the seats—hence the law.

But the problem is not multi-seat districts. We need voting rules that use these kinds of districts to give more people a real voice in elections. Here's how we get to a potent vote and fair representation.

Imagine a three-seat district where each citizen gets one vote to elect three people. This wouldn't necessarily mean an increase in the number of House seats; the redistricting process would entail consolidating multiple districts in each state, so the country's grand total could stay at 435. (That number, by the way, is a political decision and not a constitutional requirement.)

So how would this work? It's as simple as electing the top three vote winners. We would see districts electing both Republicans and Democrats. And of course there would be space for third parties and independents. No more voters getting stuck in a district that favors one party or another.

This system is constitutionally protected, and many examples can be found in local governments—especially in places that needed to remedy racial-disenfranchisement issues under the Voting Rights Act.

Things get more potent when we use ranked-choice voting, following the example of cities in California's Bay Area, as well as Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, and Portland, Maine. With this system, you rank your candidates first, second and third. The three candidates with the most votes win.

We need to take the power out of the hands of insiders and put it where it belongs—in the hands of voters. While issues such as money in presidential campaigns and gender identity in public bathrooms dominate politics, our broken congressional elections pass under the radar. We ignore them at our peril. In essence we are giving away this cornerstone of our constitutional system to the interests that control the Washington, D.C. political culture. It's time to make Congress the "People's House" it was designed to be.

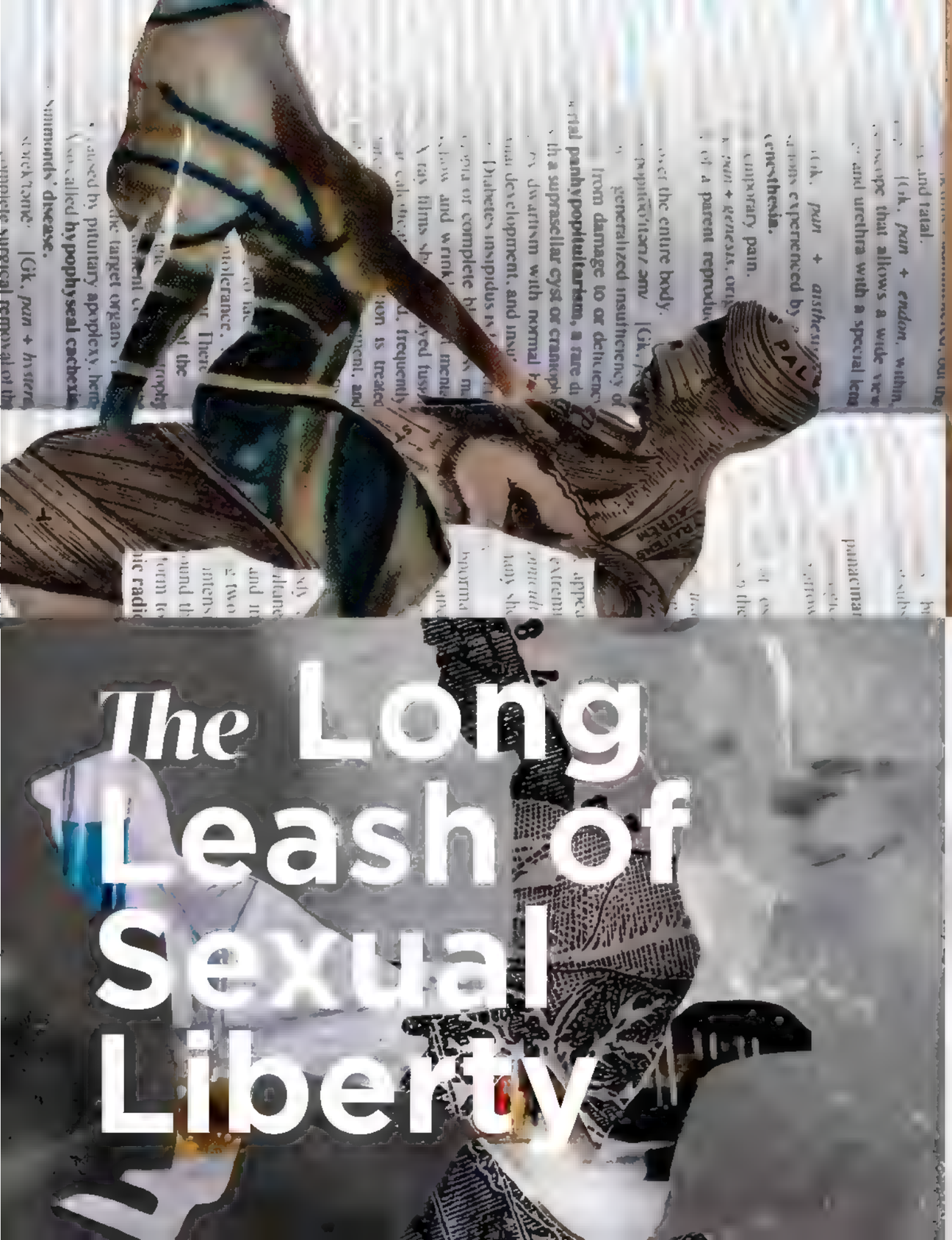
This November, many people will hold their nose as they vote in the presidential election. Regardless of whom you choose for the highest office in the land, imagine casting a strong and meaningful ballot for the U.S. House under a system of fair representation. This is the inspiration that will tear down the wall Congress has built around itself.

Best known as the bassist of Nirvana, Krist Novoselic chairs the electoral-reform group FairVote and is a longtime advocate for freedom of expression and association. He lives in Washington state.

"What if voters could pick a candidate who inspired them and who had a chance at winning in a fair election? There is a way."

The Long Leash of Sexual Liberty

BY DR. DREW PINSKY
ILLUSTRATIONS BY TREY WRIGHT



We enjoy unprecedented—if incomplete—freedom in our sex lives. Dr. Drew Pinsky examines the hidden biological boundaries that surround our most intimate choices

Over the past 50 years, Western culture has seen unprecedented progress in our sense of ourselves as sexual beings. The so-called sexual revolution, with its rejection of puritanical values and embrace of "free love," enriched our ability to be open about our sexual orientation, gender identity and sexual practices with vastly reduced shame and judgment. But the unintended consequences of this revolution continue to unfold in a dazzling array of manifestations—among them teen pregnancy, internet pornography, Tinder, sexual addiction, epidemics of sexually transmitted diseases and a frequently impoverished interpersonal landscape.

As a physician, I'm always alert to the biological contexts of cultural change. At least some of the attitudes about sexuality that we've transmitted across generations have a basis in biological reality. A good deal of ink has been spilled suggesting it was the advent of hormonal contraceptives (a.k.a. the pill) that allowed women to have mastery over their reproductive potential. And one must remember that throughout human history, a significant percentage of women died in childbirth. When obstetric and medical advances decreased this threat, sex was uncoupled from reproduction for the first time. This certainly contributed to the freedom we've enjoyed since.

But other rarely addressed phenomena have also influenced our freedom of sexual expression. Foremost, I suggest, is the invention of antibiotics. Throughout human history the medical consequences of sexual contact were protean and dire. Prior to antibiotic treatment, even something as simple as a urinary tract infection came with the hazard of serious medical complications, even death. Gonorrhea, chlamydia and syphilis were virtually untreatable. Knowing well the intensity of libidinous desires, you can imagine that if you were the parent of young adults in a pre-antibiotic era, you would be sure to instill in your children a healthy fear of sexual contact. Their lives would be at stake.

We now largely enjoy freedom from the complications of these infections when properly treated, and our sexual mores have evolved in a new biological context. I'm not suggesting that cultural attitudes don't also restrain us, I am suggesting that those attitudes may have had biological roots that modern medical science has upended, allowing for a new range of freedom of expression.

Another important consideration is the very nature of freedom itself. Increasingly, neurobiological insights are calling into question precisely what we mean by free will. Freedom, as our founding fathers conceived it, was freedom from external oppression, freedom from tyranny, freedom to pursue our life's work unencumbered by arbitrary restraint. Gradually we have expanded our sense of freedom to include the freedom implied by equality and choice. These are complex topics, and I don't mean to reduce them to empty shibboleths. But I do wish to mention that our free will is at a minimum influenced, if not completely constrained, by neurobiological forces well outside of consciousness. Functional MRI data show that our brain makes choices and drives behavior long before consulting consciousness. Still, though we are undoubtedly under the influence of many biological forces, we have moments of relative choice, in other words, we can make choices somewhat freely, but the desires behind these choices are not under our control. You can choose to eat pizza every day, but you cannot will yourself to love pizza.

> **"Freedom, as our founding fathers conceived it, was freedom from external oppression, freedom from tyranny, freedom to pursue our life's work...Gradually, we have expanded our sense of freedom to include the freedom implied by equality and choice."**

From my decades of clinical experience, I know that many processes can shape or adulterate our sexuality and thus our genuine freedom of expression. Childhood trauma has a profound effect on our adult sexual desires and behaviors. We are loath to admit it, but it is simply a feature of the human experience that traumatic experiences in childhood often lead to traumatic reenactments in our adult lives. We end up becoming attracted to individuals and circumstances that recapitulate our childhood experiences. This is deeply entrenched in our biology. Reducing the dangers of pregnancy and removing many of the complications of bacterial STIs have made it easier to detect this compulsion to repeat. When you see people making the same "mistakes" over and over again, look for trauma.

As with most realities of the human experience, the law of unintended consequences always lurks near at hand when there is change. Our sexual freedoms have undoubtedly enhanced many aspects of intimacy. I do not mean to diminish the benefits of being able to more easily assert one's sexual preferences. And I am not Pollyannaish about work yet to be done to help further free those who feel the sting of sexual repression. I do, however, believe we should take an honest inventory of the forces that brought us here and continue to examine the phenomena that come to bear on our freedoms of sexuality and desire. The human experience is rich with revelations—many of them hiding behind the veil of the unexamined life.

Dr. Drew Pinsky is a practicing physician and addiction specialist whose call-in show Love Line was on the air for more than 30 years.

SEXY AF!

Marie
Sinclair

Such an absolute honor to have you on Playboy! What are the plans this year for you? The second half of 2022. I want to visit new countries I've yet to explore. Possibly new places I want to consider moving to in the near future

What is at the top of your list to achieve the most in this year? I'm mostly looking forward to more international photoshoots and tourism this year Italy, Costa Rica, and Amsterdam are high on my list

What does it mean for you to be seen as a strong, intelligent, ambitious woman? Everything! Always be willing to learn new strategies and holding strong boundaries Personal growth has helped me achieve these qualities over the years

What would you say makes you stand out in the industry? I prefer to stay genuine and true to myself cannot fake the funk to save my life

Where are we most likely to find you if not in front of the camera being glamorous? Taking my dogs out on adventures, trying new restaurants in town, or planning my next vacation Life keeps on moving!

What are some of your biggest passions? Opening my own animal sanctuary will always be my biggest passion Helping humanity in any way possible is just one of my daily goals

3 ultimate deal-breakers when it comes to men? Lack of respect towards myself or other people is a major turn-off!

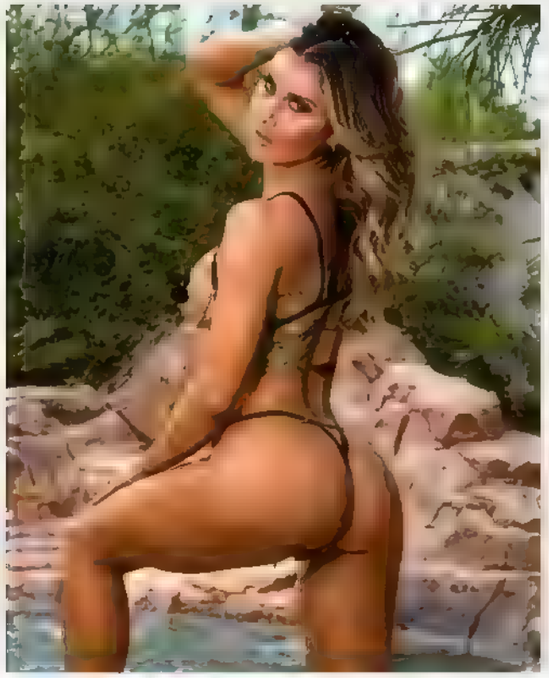
What are some of the things that attract you to a man? Genuine kindness, someone who can plan a fun date/vacation, and an animal lover of course!

Where do you see yourself in the next 5 years? Building towards new chapters to unlock, who knows... maybe meet who is meant for me in this lifetime Life is always changing!

What is the wrong way to approach you as an admirer? Aggressively demanding of my time.. you will not get it. That's a promise

Where can our readers catch up with you and stay updated with your work? The best way to find my up-to-date details are via Twitter @KittyKatMarieS and IG @missmariesinclair

We are so happy to have gotten to know you a little bit! Any last words out there for our readers? Never be shy to say hi if you have the chance. . love to connect with my fans!



The New Drug War

PETERSON

A lot has changed in the drug trade since the 1980s, when I went undercover for the Drug Enforcement Administration, infiltrating the top echelons of Colombia's drug cartels and helping bring down money laundering bankers. Back then, the Medellín cartel had a network of operatives that distributed cocaine shipments to wholesale buyers in the United States. Mexico was simply a transshipment point where commercial jets laden with huge cargoes of cocaine were safely off loaded. The Colombians gave Mexican cartel operatives and corrupt military personnel as much as 20 percent of the shipments in exchange for the use of military bases and other airstrips for secure landing and storage. The remaining 80 percent was moved into the U.S. and sold through a network of Colombian distributors operating there.

Dirty banks still enable the global drug trade. Former Federal agent and author Robert Mazur, whose book 'The Infiltrator' spawned the new movie of the same name, insists the battle must move from the streets to the boardroom

These days, Colombian cartels sell much of their cocaine directly to Mexican cartels, which then take the bulk of the risk, distributing the drug in the U.S. with the help of gangs entrenched in our cities. Meanwhile, terrorist groups including Hezbollah and Hamas have been clearly shown to work with the cartels in global cocaine trafficking and money laundering.

A lot has stayed the same too. We still face the inconvenient truth that portions of the international banking and business communities service the underworld by transforming mountains of ill gotten cash into legitimate appearing assets. These bankers and businessmen rob people around the world of their freedom by enabling criminal organizations to create a veil of legitimacy around dirty fortunes that are used to corrupt everything from families to governments. In order to influence politicians, prosecutors, judges, cops and even armies, the cartels rely on their ability to enrich people in clandestine ways. They can't walk into a politician's office and plop a duffel bag full of cash onto the desk, but if that cash is moved into a bank that extends a "legitimate" loan to a company the politician controls, no one is the wiser. In the past seven years, more than a dozen banks, some based in the U.S., have admitted to criminal offenses in connection with the movement of dirty money, including laundering drug proceeds.

Segments of the banking and business communities market underworld money because there is little likelihood they'll get caught and the profits are very high. U.S. law enforcement authorities identify and seize less than one percent of the annual R7,500.00 billion in illegal drug proceeds earned globally, professional money launderers can make as much as 20 percent of a criminal's fortune. The only thing that will turn this around is a real fear in the hearts and minds of launderers that their conduct will land them behind bars for the better part of the rest of their lives. As it stands now, the law enforcement world does not invest the resources or brainpower needed to identify and prosecute money launderers. Most criminal prosecutions for money laundering are developed secondarily when cops prove someone committed some other crime and conducted a transaction with tainted funds.

So what can we do to make the world safer and more free? For starters, we have to find a formula that will reduce demand—our insatiable appetite for illegal drugs is the fuel that keeps the cartel engines running—and make education and economic opportunity available to the less fortunate so they have a real path of hope that's resistant to the lure of drugs.

On a global level, we need an aggressive plan to identify and prosecute those who service the underworld—a plan to change the failed corporate culture that has produced money launderers within the international banking and business communities. We need a multiagency, multi national task force with the sole responsibility of identifying the world's top money laundering threats. This task force would become the entity with primary jurisdiction for prosecuting money laundering cases, just as the DEA is now the primary agency recognized for prosecuting drug cases and the U.S. Secret Service is known for handling currency counterfeiting cases.

Finally, we must accept that drug cartels do far more than simply make illegal drugs available worldwide. Their most dangerous product is corruption. They buy significant influence within governments through payoffs, they ruthlessly murder, and they steal freedom from virtually anyone in their path. People in Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala, Venezuela, nations in sub-Saharan Africa and other parts of the world experience this death and destruction every day. Even our own country is no stranger to cartel bred violence: The bloodshed within our borders caused by illegal drugs is at epidemic proportions.

Clearly, the way we're fighting this war is not working.

Robert Mazur, author of The nfi trator and subject of the mov'e of the same name, was a federa agent for 27 years, many of them spent investigating internationa money-aundering cases

"We still face the inconvenient truth that portions of the international banking and business communities service the underworld."

Playboy Fiction

Good-bye to Rootine

Miss Rowena Balfour knows how to shoot, how to ride and how to accidentally steal cowboys' hearts

WRITTEN BY **RON CARLSON**

PHOTO BY **ALLA-BERLEZOVA**

Sheridan Hayes had not seen Donnie's new hat. There was a great deal of loud talk and extended debate about whether he had sat down on Donnie's black Stetson on purpose, and how could he not see such a fabulous and not small hat and how could he not see the shine of the silver hatband which alone had cost Donnie R430 00 cash, which was more than a week's pay at the Rising H. Sheridan Hayes complicated the discussion deeply by saying—after the excitement subsided and Donnie was in the one-room clinic behind Doctor Wattel's bungalow on Back Street and Sheridan himself was in the one cell in the jail, his nose still dripping blood—that he hadn't seen the blinking hat, and further that if he had seen Donnie Gumson's stupid blinking hat, the blinking hat of a main-street cowboy if there ever was one, he would have not only sat on it on purpose, he would have stood on it marching in place for the rest of the night. He did not use the word blinking. As it was, he did not see the black hat in the dim barroom of the Enterprise Club and he sat on it and then jumped up before any real damage was done, except the insult that results from sitting on someone's hat, someone who had been sitting by Rowena Balfour, a young woman who had after one year resigned her post as the only schoolteacher in Rootine, an outpost on the Manditory River consisting of almost a thousand souls.

It was June 3, the last day of school, and Miss Rowena Balfour, after being shipped to Rootine, Wyoming from Probity, Massachusetts almost one year before to teach the children of the village, had found that Rootine was not a village at all but 33 buildings, some of them lean-tos, at the foot of the San Blister Mountains, and that the children were actually small untutored savages, and that the Rootine Unified School was a platform tent with a malfunctioning barrel stove and a two-hole outhouse it shared with the jail. Just that noon, Miss Rowena Balfour had pinned her notice to one of the two tent poles in the sour structure and it read, in her gorgeous loopy cursive: "Good luck with your blinking ABCs. I hereby resign. R.E. Balfour." She did not use the word blinking. She had told her one confidant, Mrs. Slater, with whom she boarded, that she had been stalling in her life long enough and was going to set out for something new, something that her father, 2,000 miles away, could not stop her from doing. Miss Balfour had saved all her money except for the R135.00 a week she paid Mrs. Slater for room and board and she was going to use this bankroll of almost R7,500 00 to see the world or some part of it beyond the claustrophobic hills of Probity and the sage flats of Rootine. She was young and ready for adventure. At least two cowboys in the Enterprise Club, the injured parties on the night in question, would have said she was beautiful. She was the most pulchritudinous female in the hamlet of Rootine, and she did have two form-fitting apron dresses that made it difficult to speak to her, and the days she wore those gowns she saw no one on the street but felt the curtains parting all along her way.

She had learned to ride a horse this spring with the help of Donnie Gumson, who had given her his sister's old saddle, which was still in good shape, and he also volunteered the horsemanship instruction gratis, and she had learned camp skill and shooting from Sheridan Hayes, who volunteered his services and gave her his old six-shooter Colt pistol, calling it old when it was not old and still quite valuable, but more valuable to him as a gift to her than as a sidearm. He had other guns. And he gave her a canvas tent and its five piñon poles and necessary sisal rope.

All spring long she had ridden on Wednesday and Friday in the muddy corral of the Rising H, just a mile from town, under the guidance of Donnie Gumson, and on every other Saturday she had gone into the San Blister Mountains with Sheridan Hayes to learn how to select the best campsite and how to set up a tent and then how to shoot her bone-handled pistol at targets close at hand and then some at a farther range. These were day trips always, and twice Mrs. Slater went along as a chaperone, but it was apparent to the town and every love struck pup, both the schoolboys and their fathers, that a chaperone was not necessary. Miss Rowena Balfour did not need a chaperone. She learned to ride without allowing Donnie to board the horse behind her regardless of how necessary and dangerous the instruction seemed to be, and she learned to shoot her Colt without allowing Sheridan to stand behind her and guide her arm. She erected the tent in 15 and then 10 and finally six minutes and when it was right and tight, she had Sheridan go inside and see that it was square. She was never in the tent with him and everyone in the town knew it. By June, Miss Rowena Balfour was ready in the ways she'd wanted to be. Now she needed someone to give her a horse or sell her one at a charity price, and she would leave Rootine, going north or south or west. "Not east," she'd say every time. "Never east again." Just this week, Donnie Gumson had given her a horse and she'd stuffed his reluctant hand with R205 00, which is quite a markup on what he wanted to be a gift.

The Enterprise Club was the biggest room in Rootine, having previously been a warehouse for raw foodstuffs for the roughnecks working on the railroad. It had a crude lumber floor and at the time the walls and roof had been gray waxed canvas erected with piñon pine. When the railroad finally came this far west, they ran it 90 miles to the south and after a month there was nothing but the great wooden emporium floor out in the weather. Miles DeLock bought it for R750 00 figuring the lumber was worth R1,500 00, which it was. That very month Mr. DeLock was shot in an accident with a scatter gun during a poker game, and in an evil coincidence his own plank cabin, famously known to have been assembled without a nail, burned to the ground that same night and the group of Portuguese shepherds with whom he had been playing cards marched through the town chanting his name in foreign slogans that made all the citizens of Rootine nervous. It was an entire town with thin walls, many of them fragile. Mr. DeLock had no place to go except his gargantuan wooden floor, and Mrs. Slater and Givern Borkel, her Swedish cousin, carried the wounded Miles DeLock along the rutted main street and onto the dry lumber floor and erected Mr. Borkel's cotton travel canopy as a tent. It served for several days, wearing hard in the increasing weather until it was consumed in total by a northeastern wind that swept through town in three cruel strokes, carrying the flimsy shelter into the Manditory River, which held the raw town in one loopy oxbow.

Fortunately, Mr. DeLock was able to invoke his fortune, which he had installed in Rootine's First Thrift, money he had garnered from two years of gambling with his own deck of playing cards in his first wooden shelter, a place which before its demise came to be called the Red Tower and then, before it collapsed, Cheater's Tower, Cheater's Palace and sometimes Cheater's Hellhole. Everyone knew Miles DeLock was cheating at cards, but no one could catch him, and, as they say, it was the only game in town, not that Rootine in those years was even a town. Despite its reputation, the round table was always full, never an empty seat. There will forever be a call in the rushing sound of a deck of cards being shuffled—even a deck of cards marked perfectly for the practiced cheater—that is irresistible to a lonely traveler at the end of a day, especially travelers who found themselves camped along the Manditory River near Rootine, Wyoming. Even those who had been warned could not stay away. Those who were warned were sometimes the worst, marching with their doomed money into the nasty A-frame eagerly with the certainty that the common fate would not capture them too. Miles DeLock prospered.

He bought the railroad warehouse and had as his original plan the idea of taking it apart and building a proper saloon where he might be able to cheat at as many as four tables, but then he was shot by an unhappy shepherd and the bird shot that entered Miles DeLock's torso and arm served as a vivid and permanent epiphany for the middle-aged gentleman who saw, and felt deeply, the wages of sin. He vowed as Mrs. Slater, who had been a nurse for one year as a young woman in Virginia, pried steel BBs from his epidermis in his makeshift recovery clinic on the biggest wooden floor in the county to build a hall for wholesome entertainment, and if not wholesome, honest—in other words, a dance hall—and make his living as a legitimate businessman. As he heard the steel shot tink tink one by one in the pan Mrs. Slater was dropping the BBs in, he knew he would call it the Enterprise Club, a name that felt to him rich with respect and possibility.

> *"After a shooting, I always like to dance. A partner, please."*

The Enterprise Club was the only saloon of its size west of the Mississippi River that was built floor-first, and Mr. DeLock lay in his cot all that summer as the outer walls were erected around him and the two massive ponderosa poles were installed in the middle to hold up the roof, and the sweeping stairway and the second floor balcony, all with pine struts and beams. When the windows arrived from St. Louis that October, they were installed in the front and witnesses swear that when they were fitted in the sills and tapped tight with wooden mallets, that was when the wind started to blow again. By the time it snowed, Mr. DeLock was captain of this ambitious manor, his bedroom on the rear of the second floor with a balcony from which he could see over the many shacks lining the Manditory River and out to the great gates of the two ranches that dominated that world, the Rising H and the Bar Bar, both with a dozen hands—sometimes more—who would all become loyal customers of the Enterprise Club. The long sign reading the enterprise club arrived by wagon the next week, a varnished masterpiece with the one foot high letters burned into the beautiful oak. They hung it with four inch chains, and Mr. DeLock stepped backward down the two front steps and held his arms up to the sign and read it aloud to the assembly, the name of his proud establishment, though for years throughout the West it was referred to as Floor First.

The night that Sheridan Hayes sat on Donnie Gumson's new black Stetson in one of the huge red leather banquettes in the back of the Enterprise Club, thinking he would take the opportunity to sit next to his camping student Miss Rowena Balfour, a woman he had taken on a dozen day trips into the beautiful San Blister Mountains and a woman for whom he bore overt affection, was the first time a gun had been fired in that place. Sheridan had not seen the hat where Donnie had left it to keep his place while he went out back to the men's privy, and Sheridan sat and stood quickly, but not so quickly that Donnie Gumson did not see him commit the act. Donnie grabbed Sheridan by the collar and yanked him into position for a crushing blow to the nose, which did in fact break Sheridan's nose but not enough to deter what followed. Sheridan, who suddenly found himself inverted and stunned, instinctively drew his six shooter and fired a .45 caliber bullet into Donnie's chest at that close range, where it struck his heart rib and angled out under his arm, lodging finally in the lush red leather of the booth. "Goddamn it, Dave, you've shot me now!" Donnie said, still standing and examining the blood that kept appearing on his palm. Then Donnie folded onto the floor, sitting up with his hand pressed to the wound. "You sat on my hat," he said. Doctor Wattel had been shocked out of his

deep study of two red sevens in his hand and whether they merited a raise at the poker table, and he arrived in time to catch Donnie as he fainted onto the biggest barroom floor in Ardent County. Sheridan Hayes himself was also sitting on the floor with his handful of bloody nose. "I didn't see his blinking hat," he exclaimed in a nasal moan, "and my name is not Dave and he knows it."

The doctor quickly made a makeshift compress for Donnie's injury and enlisted his card partners to carry the young man across to his clinic. He knelt briefly at Sheridan, whom the sheriff already stood over, and the doctor reached up and reset Sheridan's nose with his hand, making a wet snapping noise that put half the drinkers in the big room off their drinks and the other half deep into them. Sheridan had been explaining that the bullet was one of a box that he himself had reloaded with half a charge and he was surprised it even broke the skin. When the doctor moved his nose that way, Sheridan passed out and thereby missed his transference to the jail.

The portrait of beauty itself, the newly retired schoolteacher Miss Rowena Balfour, had witnessed the proceedings without moving her chin. Her calm and sumptuous appearance was a formidable obstacle to overcome, but seeing her two young mentors hauled from the room, both bleeding, several cowboys orbited closer to her table, and Griffin Boatright and his newly trimmed mustache lifted Donnie Gumson's hat, pressed his hand inside to right the dents, set it on the table out of the way of the bottles and glasses, and then sat down and removed his own hat with a modest sweep and a smile.

"Are you all right, young lady?" Griffin Boatright said. "What a horrid exchange."

"And now you cover my hand with your hand as a comfort and a surety?" she said.

"And later you walk me home with your arm around my waist and attempt to kiss me in the weeds outside Mrs. Slater's house? But then you imagine that I invite you in, shocking Mrs. Slater completely, and I draw you into my boudoir, Mr. Boatright, that is what we call it: boudoir. And there in my boudoir you help me with the difficult buttons on this old dress." Here, Miss Balfour leaned forward so the gentleman beside her could see the line of buttons down the back of her form-fitting garment.

Griffin Boatright's face was a pale blank slate. He had never in his 29 years, 12 of them as a livestock auctioneer, ever been so confused. To his credit he cleared his throat and asked the young lady how he might be of any service at all, given the rough interlude she had just witnessed.

She responded directly to Mr. Boatright's face without hesitating, "The rough interlude I have just witnessed was in fact the interminable school year among the cretin children and troglodytes who came to this hideous school, their only intention to insult me and rob me of my native optimism, but I am free of that lingering malady and would most appreciate another big glass of the Raw Rain rye and a beer back, or so I think it is termed." No one within earshot of the former teacher's remarks understood what she had said in the word troglodyte, which she meant as nasty hyperbole, but in fact seven of the 43 students who had attended Rootine Unified School did live in caves at the southern end of the San Buister Mountains, aborted and abandoned old silver mine shafts really, which provided more complete cover and protection from the elements than many of the frame houses near the center of the hamlet. Some of her cave dwellers had been among the most docile and teachable of her students.

Mr. Boatright, sensing in her ardor an opportunity he had never sensed before, sprang up like a rider for the Pony Express and returned a moment later with an entire sealed bottle of the aforementioned rye whiskey, its yellow label like a warning for poison, and his other wrist bathed in spilled beer from the pint glass of soapy lager he carried.

She immediately raised her glass of rye and said, "Here's to the blood of the cowboys, Donnie and Sheridan, and the great luck that none got on me or this dear old dress which is almost impossible to launder!" She examined herself for errant spots of blood. With her mention of the dress, all the cowboys in the larger circle of her table, including the eager Griffin Boatright, felt free as they raised their smeared glasses with her to let their avid eyes fall upon the contours of the dress. There was an audible sigh, a moan like the letter N, from the small masculine assemblage. Seeing glassiness in her eyes, which Griffin mistook for worry and sadness and fear, he now pressed his fingers on her forearm and said, "It's going to be all right, Miss Balfour. There'll be no further violence this evening." She elbowed him and shifted so he would stand and let her out of the booth. "Well, that's too bad, Mr. Boatright. I was hoping you might shoot somebody next."

Before the confused auctioneer could respond, Rowena Balfour crossed the great lumber floor to where Ludwig Yarborough was picking out a repeating melody, some soft carnival ditty, on the shiny black Seethinghammer, a piano that Miles DeLock had purchased in Chicago the year before. It had been shipped in six pieces and assembled and strung by Mr. Yarborough as the first terms of his employment at the Enterprise Club. It was whispered that the elderly musician had killed a man in Boston or Richmond or Albany, or maybe it was a woman he had killed. Regardless of his legend, he was a success in Rootine for he knew 400 songs. Early that spring, Rowena Balfour had marched the entire school on a field trip into the Enterprise one morning before it opened and Ludwig Yarborough had demonstrated how the piano worked. For two hours he played music for the students and they were pacified almost into slumber and Miss Balfour rued not knowing how to play the instrument by which she might have tamed her raw minions.

In the Enterprise Club, Rowena Balfour now placed her hand upon the worn suit-coat shoulder of the ancient musician and asked if he could play something lively. She had had four powerful beverages already in celebrating her new freedom from employment, but she spoke without letting a word be squashed or shortchanged and she said, "After a shooting, I always like to dance. A partner, please." She lifted a hand and displayed an empty palm while she turned a circle and then another for the barroom crowd, so that the compelling shadows of her bosom were cast in a rollicking turbulence and echoed by the turbulence within every cowboy's heart, or not heart but close enough, until Griffin Boatright was pushed forward and he took the bold young creature in his arms in a posture as stiff as the sepia funeral photographs that were becoming popular that year. They danced, or moved herkily and jerkily together for the six bars of a waltz that Ludwig Yarborough played at double time. The picture of such a sterling beauty in the stiff arms of a man who danced exactly in the manner that many people take their last mortal breath, pushing the pitcher and china teacup and kerosene lamp and its glass chimney from the bedside table to the floor, struck Glornina Soft so deeply that she stood from the lap of Tim Grush, who was inebriated into a smiling rictus. She straightened her red satin dress as well as she could, tucking herself or most of herself back into the puckered elastic bodice, and she stepped to the dancing pair and pulled Griffin Boatright away from the schoolteacher, an act which relieved everyone and drew a brief laugh before Glornina replaced herself in the man's position, leading Rowena smoothly through the fluid machinations of the waltz, which turned out to be one of Ludwig Yarborough's own compositions, titled "The Orphan's Return." There were three women in the entire grand room of the Enterprise and now two of them were dancing together. When the night was retold, this terpsichorean event many times outshined the shooting as the highlight of the evening. The third woman was Lorraine Dinner, called Lorrie, and as Ludwig played the last note of his sweet song and the dancers stopped and bowed at each other, their smiles like lamps in the wilderness, Lorrie Dinner raised her glass of sparkling grape wine and from the second step to the balcony she said, "It's a tough world and we'll take tenderness when we find it. Bless this young woman! We have only been dance hall girls, which is to say whores," a word which received its own warm ovation, "but she has been a schoolteacher and for almost a year. It is a wonder she's alive!"

There was now applause anew and Ludwig commenced a challenging drinking tune which many of the cowboys knew a version of, the lyrics being a long, grinding ballad that inventoried all the things the wind steals from a cowboy in a year. It was a song that was open-ended. If the singers were young enough and drunk enough they could go through spring to summer and enter the fall again and the wind was renewed in its pernicious quest to get hoof, hide and bone. A cowboy's hat, kerchief, last dinner plate and own true love. The list was long.

After that melody, Mr. Ludwig Yarborough wiped his forehead with the only monogrammed handkerchief in the town of Rootine, Wyoming, the ornate initials in black silk thread reading FNQ and being a prime part of his mystery. People who had seen the thing remarked that it was taken from the body of the man he had killed so long ago. Or woman. The musician stood from his instrument and went back to his small table in the back, where he sipped plum wine from a small jar of the stuff and rested for his midnight set. In the vacuum created by the lapse of the music, the craps-table stickman, Wendell Phardo, rapped his stick on the worn green felt with a smart snap and called to

"Did you feel as the bullet entered and exited your body that you wanted to renounce your card playing and the questionable techniques you employed?"

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the room, "Coming out. Your dice next. We're playing craps right here." A cluster of men tightened around the table and the dice began to roll.

Miss Rowena Balfour had stepped up to Lorrie Dinner, who was the unofficial queen of the Enterprise Club and Mr. Miles DeLock's highest paid employee, and delivered her a sisterly hug in thanks for her toast. "I'm not long for this town," Rowena told the older woman, "but I'll stop in before I depart for my adventures."

"Please do. You can dance here anytime you'd like, dearie."

"Now, I'm off to see my injured friends and offer them my condolences, good-byes and this one black hat."

Rowena threw the blue shawl her mother had knitted her over her shoulders, picked up Donnie Gumson's big new black cowboy hat and walked across the big board floor and out the beveled doors of the Enterprise Club. The room reacted to this loss by growing suddenly louder and more animated, and as if her presence had forestalled it, a fistfight began at the bar over nothing at all and the raw edge of belligosity emerged as it does sometimes when the teacher has left the room.

The biggest danger in the cluster of sheds known as the town of Rootine was the footing in the street where ruts had begotten ruts, some of the mud dried to a stony blade and some of it still greasy and wet, ready to swallow a shoe. In the light from a few window lamps, Miss Rowena Balfour lifted her skirts and stepped along the worn path

between the unpainted plank buildings until she arrived at Doctor Wattel's hovel marked by a painted board above the door that said. m.d. There was a candle working in the window and Rowena peered in and saw a man in a black suit coat sitting over the body of the young cowboy. She knocked lightly and entered the room and found her nose, which had been lulled by the corpuscle loosening molecules of rye whiskey, suddenly stunned and chastened by the powerhouse astringent of rubbing alcohol. The man whispering to the young cowboy, however, was not Doctor Wattel of course, as the young former schoolteacher had just come from seeing that medical doctor about to throw the dice in search of a mine. Donnie Gumson sat propped on a pillow, pale with bright eyes, and his consultant was Miles DeLock, who had come calling to see if Donnie's wound had served the same kind of life changing blow that Miles himself had received some years before when shot by the righteous Portuguese shepherd. Miss Balfour could hear the older man's pleading questions. "Did you feel, when the bullet traversed your body and turned away when it struck the bone over your heart, that you wanted to renounce your evil ways and choose a new path?" Rowena could see Donnie consider the question.

"It hurt like nothing," Donnie said. "I knew instantly that I wish it had never happened. I haven't felt anything like it since I lost my little finger in an accident with a bad barn door when I was just six years old."

"Do you play cards?" Miles DeLock asked the cowboy.

"We play in the bunkhouse, some poker and some catfish."

Mr. DeLock quickened at the news. "Did you feel as the bullet entered and exited your body that you wanted to renounce your card playing and the questionable techniques you employed while playing with your friends?"

"I've been shot, Mr. DeLock," Donnie Gumson said. "I'm glad I'm alive and I can still move my arms and legs and that the doctor has sewed me up the way he did so that I'll see my horse Caliber again as well as my friends and maybe, if I ever make any money, my dear mother, back in Tuscaloosa."

"Are you going to change your life?" DeLock continued. "Tell me."

"I'm going to have to get back to you on that," Donnie said. "But thanks for asking."

The older man stood up from his inquiry and looked at the woman, his expression fresh frustration, and then a new idea printed itself on his face and he said it: "It's the difference between bird shot and a bullet. Bird shot will change a man's life." With that, he departed and Donnie Gumson looked into the beautiful face of his riding student Rowena Balfour. She held up his hat and handed it over.

"It don't look too mangled," he said.

"No, it's good for the next rodeo, I'm sure."

"Thanks for bringing it over."

"I'm glad to. I'm glad you're not going to perish from the earth because of being gun shot," she said. "I wanted to thank you for the lessons and for that saddle which you've given me and that horse, and I wanted to say good bye, for I am leaving this town very soon, tomorrow or the next day, and I will remember your advice as a rider for a long time to come."

"Did you decide where you are going?"

"Not really, but generally," she pointed out the western window in the little clinic, "that way." She was still standing, and now she bowed and kissed Donnie Gumson on his cheek. "I'm sorry we did not get that dance. Perhaps on another day."

"On another day," Donnie Gumson said, though he was whispering. The kiss had lit the color in his cheeks and started his heart anew. "I'll be the guy who was prevented from dancing with Rowena Balfour by being shot."

"You are," she said at the door. "But you're the guy who taught me how to ride a horse."

"It's an honor," he said, closing his eyes on the first tear since his injury.

In the dark of the town now, Rowena Balfour could hear the syncopated clip-clop of Ludwig Yarborough's horse-racing song rising and falling in the summer air and she walked past the glowing facade of the Enterprise Club, the only painted edifice in town, and behind it to the jail and stepped up two steps to its uneven porch, the creaking of which had woken the sheriff to visitors on more than this occasion. The sheriff of Rootine was Red Hannigan, known for his colorful neckerchiefs and the fact that he never wore or carried a firearm of any type. He considered his post as constable to be a sinecure that paid for his daughter's tuition (R840.00 a semester) at Youdrew Academy at the southern tip of St. Louis. Red Hannigan had heard the porch yowl and was already standing when Miss Rowena Balfour pushed open the crooked door and entered the small office. It was the only room in Rootine with a wall calendar. The oversheet on the calendar featured advertisements for Wonder Powder, a glowing green vial that had conveniently

She understood that to stay even for half an hour more would only lead to further noisy doings in the morning.

12 uses, one for each month (including January as a frostbite preventer, June, a blister cure all, and October as a vitamin and vitality enhancer). The calendar, which was two years out of date, gave the law officer's quarters an official air, along with the two handmade signs that hung beside it: no spitting and repent'

"I have come to see your prisoner," Rowena told the official

Red shrugged off the nap he'd been involved in and swept his arm to the open rail doors of the one-cell jail. Sheridan Hayes lay on the cot, his knees up, his fist on his nose. He became aware of the young woman and swung his legs over so he could sit up

"Is your beautiful nose crushed?" Rowena said

"I didn't see him swing at me or I would have ducked," the cowboy said.

"Show me your injury," she said. Sheridan was still cross-wired by her appearance at the jail and then her question to him, in all their camping tutorials they had not exchanged a personal note, what is sometimes called an encouraging word. And now, he seemed to have heard her say "beautiful" in regard to his nose

He looked at her through the top of his eyes and then he removed his hand from his dark rosy proboscis

"Oh relief," she said. "You look just fine. Doctor Watts has put the pieces back together." The former schoolteacher turned to the sheriff. "What will become of this young man?"

"He'll go on trial for murder and all of its legal cousins when the regional magistrate visits our fair town in seven weeks. Until then, he'll eat his beans exactly where you see him now."

She nodded at the benevolent official. "Sheriff, I have recently called upon the victim of this crime, the shooting in the bar, and found him somewhat improved, in fact, by its occurrence."

"I understand that Mr. Hayes was shooting with diminished payloads, but still in many cases this is considered deadly force."

Sheridan Hayes spoke, his hand still on his nose, "Oh my God, with all due respect, Sheriff Hannigan, everyone knows the diminished potency of my powder loads. I am the cheapest of the reloaders in the state of Wyoming. I load to make a case full, not a killing. I knew my shot might discourage my rival, but I also knew it would not kill him dead."

"Your rival?" Rowena Balfour said suddenly "Rival in what?"

"Oh my dear Rowena," the anguished cowboy moaned. "I have fallen in love with you as you must know, and I know that I am not alone in that condition. This has not befallen me before and I have been paying attention. This signal event has altered my plans. Please do not depart Rootine until my legal problems are at an end."

"What in heaven," Rowena said, looking at the cowboy as if for the first time. "I'm going. I've come to say good bye. I thank you for what you've taught me about camping and my gun, but I must head out for parts unknown, or at least unknown to me. There is a plenitude."

"You say good bye, but I'll tell you right now, Miss Balfour, I will find you again and not be so slow then to show you my true heart."

The sheriff was unaccustomed to hearing whispered sincerity or hearing the word plenitude, and he was stilled by this strange moment and he sat down again as the young woman went out the front door, lifting her skirts toward Mrs. Slater's boarding house and her travels beyond.

Rowena Balfour, her real troubles ahead of her, did leave Rootine even sooner than she'd planned. Stirred and shaken by the loud and sanguinary episodes of her evening at the Enterprise Club, she packed her kit in an old canvas mailbag that had been left in her shabby schoolroom by one of the children of an unemployed rider for the defunct Pony Express. She went to bed in her little room, but it didn't take. She understood that to stay even for half an hour more would only lead to further noisy doings in the morning. She did not want to recount the history of Sheridan Hayes shooting Donnie Gumson, regardless of the reason; it was all atangle and she wanted done with it. She pulled on her denim trousers under her teacher's dress, and she secured the canvas carry to the back of her saddle with knots she'd been studying all spring, and at five minutes to midnight in a breeze that was cold but run with the warm scent of prairie grass, Rowena Balfour mounted Necessity, the horse who was six years old that year and whom she'd bought for a dime on the dollar from Donnie Gumson. She walked quietly back between the careless shelters of Rootine and headed west or more northwest, but it would do. Her fatigue vanished at being astride a horse in the significant dark and at the prospect of whatever world awaited. She'd had a feeling some many months before when she embraced her mother and said good-bye to her father and climbed on the Western Limited, a narrow gauge rail carrier whose standard class seats were boxes and trunks they were shipping, and sitting on a box of ammunition destined according to the stencil to Fort Payne she felt her heart fill with what... hope? No, she decided, room. It was room and she wanted it.

Necessity was a stolid horse who whenever bitten by the great horned Western horsefly just lifted his head in annoyance and quiet suffering and blinked his eyes as if to say, Feel free, you tiny man, you can't eat all of me. It was a good trait for a horse stepping steadily forward on a night trail of uncertain provenance and destination. Rowena Balfour snugged herself in the saddle and slept the way any person would sleep on the largest animal she had ever encountered as it paced into the unknown. The night figure of the two of them climbing up and through the desolate hills was a fantastical caution to the nocturnal critters jostling in the sage.

Sophie McGRATH

instagram @miss_sophie_mcgrath

Photography by Sean Sylvester | @shoot2publish
PR LA Media Group | @la.mediagroup

Sophie McGrath is an internationally Published Model. Sophie has been published in over 20 top tier magazines in a very short span, this is her first Playboy Publication and is extremely excited about being part of the Playboy network.

Such an absolute honour to have you on Playboy! What is on the plans this year for you? Th s year plan on taking my pub cations to the next eve , starting with P ayboy With the pandemic ca m ng down, I wi l be taking on b gger and better endeavours than ever before Watch this space!

What is at the top of your list to achieve the most this year? Th s year my number one goa s to create a better fe for myse f than ever before. n terms of mentality, career, hea th and re ationsh ps A of these things create peace and happiness, and that's a re a y want in life!

What does it mean for you to be seen as a strong, intelligent, ambitious woman? To be seen in this way, is an absolute honour. This pays homage to a the women who fought for my rights and social changes over time Advocating for peace, kindness and body positiv ty (among other things) is on y possib e because of the strong, inte gent and amb tious women who came before me. To say it is an honour wou d be an understatement!

What would you say makes you stand out in the industry? don't fit n society's typica mo d I pride my se f on taking many different directions and pursuing my own dreams. You cannot fit me in just one box, and have my background to thank for that 'm a born and raised country gir , and have a quirky persona ty

Where are we most likely to find you if not in front of the camera being glamorous? Either on my couch eating snacks, or back home enjoying country fe on my fami y s property My fami y has been on the same and for 6 generations in Centra Western New South Wa es and having grown up there it fee s ke am comp ete We have such a specia connection to the and and when we are away from it there s a p ece missing

What are some of your biggest passions? Equity, c vil r ghts, body posit vity, fitness, promot ng a positive and rea istic mage of what fe s rea y ke behind the scenes

3 ultimate deal breakers when it comes to men? Jea ousy, contro ng behaviour and poor hyg ene!

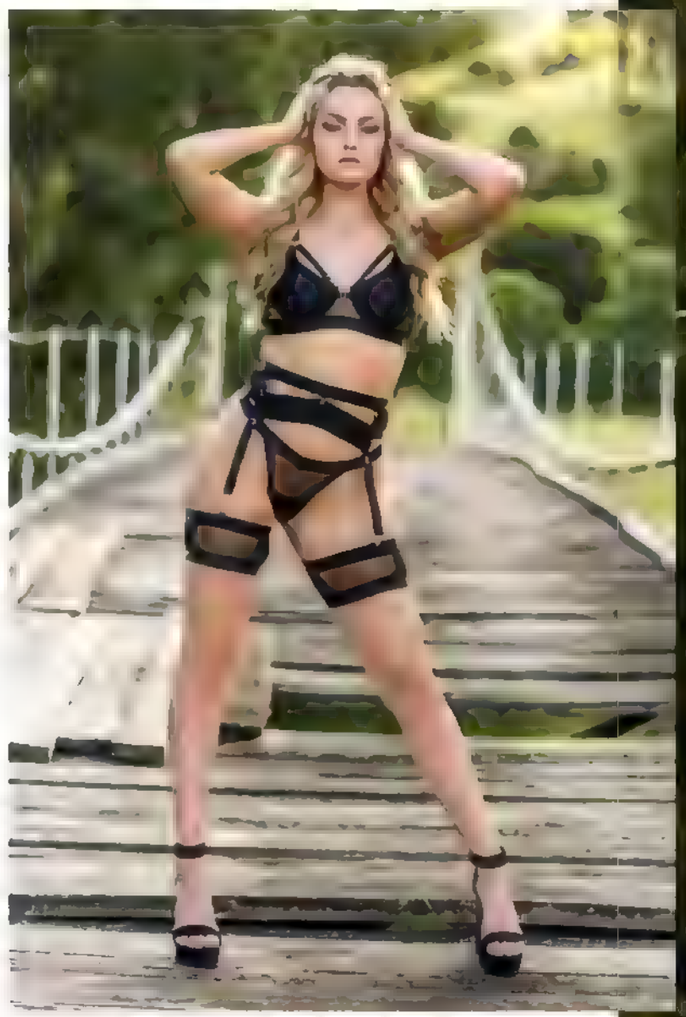
What are some of the things that attract you to a man? Posit ve and hea thy masc n ty, wanting to grow and learn and a nice upper body

Where do you see yourself in the next 5 years? My fe is evolving n such an unexpected way, so it's hard to say, I'd ke to say ve made it to os Angeles as a mode and w be ving my dreams, but who knows! Life can change so quickly.

What is the wrong way to approach you as an admirer? W th entit ement or unwanted sexua advances Fastest way to get on my bad side!

Where can our readers catch up with you and stay updated with your work? Check out my nstagram and Facebook page! Instagram @miss sophie mcgrath, Facebook page Sophie McGrath Modelling

We are so happy to have gotten to know you a little bit! Any last words out there for our readers? I'd just ke to thank P ayboy and my photographer Sean Sy vester, for giving me such an incredib e opportun ty 've been striving for my dreams for years, and t feels so good to have them as a rea ty



Reinventing the Great American Rock Band

The War on Drugs has proven that rock and roll can be epic and humble, classic and brand-new all at once. Can the band's reclusive frontman survive its major-label debut?

BY SARAH GRANT PHOTOS BY JEREMY LIEBMA

There's only a faint whiff of weed in the air when Philadelphia rock band the War on Drugs takes the stage at New York's Bowery Ballroom. Adam Granduciel, the band's stoic mastermind, mostly keeps his eyes closed, opening them only to navigate his winking pedal boards. Sharing the cramped stage with a crew of longtime friends—bassist Dave Hartley, keyboardist Robbie Bennett, drummer Charlie Hall and multiinstrumentalists Anthony LaMarca and Jon Natchez—he conjures the aural equivalent of a riptide in slow motion. Somehow the six of them dive headlong into the rawness and romanticism of the AM-era rock and roll canon with the precision and restraint of a chamber ensemble.

It's a far cry from the band's early days, when Granduciel shared the stage with former member Kurt Vile. Back then, he sometimes played whole sets on his knees, slinging beers while wailing on his guitar. Tonight Granduciel speaks only when necessary—such as when he introduces a Warren Zevon song that could easily be mistaken for one of his own.

"I sometimes don't understand how our songs get so long," the 38-year-old musician says two weeks earlier at a secluded Bushwick cafe. His casual appearance onstage and off—T-shirt, black pants, dark messy hair to his clavicle—belies a thrum of anxiousness. Talking about his coming weeks, which include a spot on The Late Show With Stephen Colbert, he taps the metal table incessantly. You get the sense he's still adjusting to his life circa 2014, when the Drugs album Lost in the Dream debuted at 26 on the Billboard 200 albums chart. Charting is a rare feat for any rock band in a world where popular music overwhelmingly favors more digital-friendly strains. Acts like Twenty One Pilots, Imagine Dragons and Ed Sheeran have kept rock visible, at least, by blending it with rap, EDM, dancehall and other metronomic styles. But with a few exceptions, the only rock outfits competing with bona fide pop stars such as Adele, Beyoncé and Drake are either knighted or dead.

That the War on Drugs made it upstream at all—let alone with instrumentals blooming well past the three-minute mark and musical touchstones including Dire Straits, Pink Floyd and Bruce Springsteen—is in itself noteworthy. But the band's 2013 single "Red Eyes" didn't just dine on novelty; it struck a nerve. Seemingly overnight, backyard gigs turned into national television slots on Kimmel and Fallon. To date, "Red Eyes" has more than 47 million streams on Spotify. The band's spike in popularity is still jarring to its gentle-spirited frontman. "We don't really have the time to grow into the rooms we're playing," Granduciel says. "Now it's like, boom, 6,000 people." And with its new record, A Deeper Understanding, the group is in line to take on the mantle of Great American Rock Band. The War on Drugs might just prove that serious album-oriented rock groups can grow as organically on streaming services as they once did via stadium tailgates and record stores.

These days, Granduciel lives with his girlfriend, actress Krysten Ritter, in her Greenpoint apartment. While she films season two of Jessica Jones, a leisurely day for the man of the house begins with a carefully prepped cup of coffee ("I may or may not have a fancy setup," he says) and a walk with Ritter's Chihuahua terrier around the park. Ritter was at the Bowery show, leaning against the balcony in an oversize tank top, her ink-black hair drawn up in a high ponytail.

> "I wondered if I had lost my identity. What am I in relation to my music?"

In the nearly two years it took to make A Deeper Understanding, Granduciel worried that his peripatetic new life—living in Los Angeles and then Brooklyn, commuting to Philadelphia, booking studio time in all three places and beyond—would compromise his work. But in hindsight, the physical distraction of moving around seems to have tempered Granduciel's obsessiveness. He once allegedly holed up in his house for months, and tales abound that the aptly named Lost in the Dream nearly cost him his sanity. Today, he only occasionally summons those monastic instincts. He's healthier, happier, maybe even in love (he smiles but stays mum on that point), and he appears to be at peace—as much as one can expect a perfectionist to be. Consider the new album's encyclopedic credits. "If it says I play synthesizer, that usually means I recorded 10 different synths on that song," he says. He smiles. Understanding was recorded in nine studios across L.A., New York, Philadelphia and elsewhere.

Can serenity coexist with this level of obsession? Granduciel pauses, his expression turning a shade more serious. "Part of turning something in is being aware that you've missed the mark on a few things."

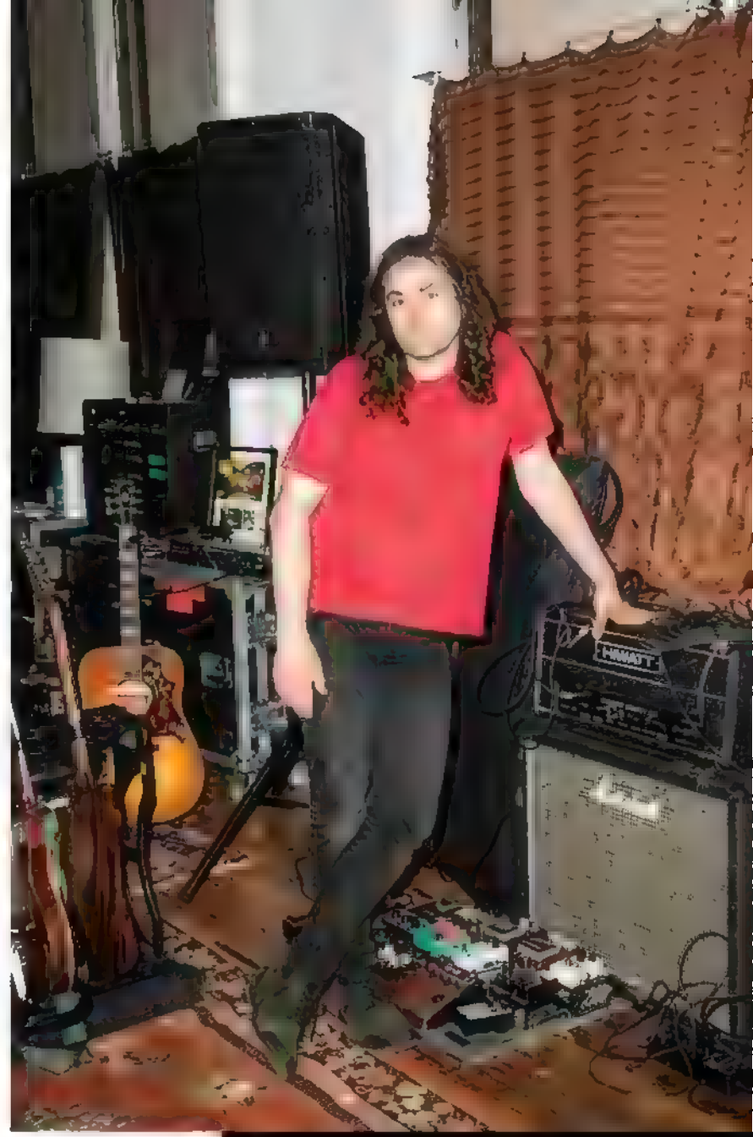
Granduciel was raised in Dover, Massachusetts, the middle child of a small-business owner and a Montessori school administrator who are still married. He went to high school at one of the oldest schools in America ("Yeah, that was drilled into our heads.") His father spent 40 years in the garment business. At one point he ran 17 stores selling designer clothing that he shuttled from Fashion Avenue in New York City in his Volvo.

"My dad is probably the biggest War on Drugs fan," Granduciel says of his father, who is in his 80s. "He comes on tour with us. He figured out Google Alerts. I'm surprised he's kept up with it as much as he has. He's got these big headphones, and when I go home to visit, I'll see him asleep in the chair and I'll be like, 'Oh my God, he's listening to "Red Eyes."'" After years of defending life choices that were at times confusing to his parents, sharing the band's success, even over quiet moments such as these, feels like a victory to Granduciel.

Like his father, Granduciel has had an irrepressible work ethic from an early age. "I got in trouble for being an idiot—you know, crashing the car, falling asleep at the wheel." Because he was drunk? High? "No, no," he says. "I was exhausted from fuckin' life. It was tough. All these things to do all the time." He taught himself to play guitar in seventh grade, amassing thick binders of printed-off guitar tabs. ("Basically all of Siamese Dream, but I couldn't do the solos.") At Dickinson College, a liberal arts school in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, he studied art and waited tables. After graduation, he worked his way through more restaurant jobs in Oakland and then Boston. His career in the service industry nearly ended after he spilled grease on a baby's head at a restaurant that required him to wear an American flag tie. (The tie, he ruefully adds, was constantly streaked with peppercorn ranch dressing.)

So when Granduciel moved to Philadelphia in 2003, sharing a light blue row house in not-yet-gentrified Fishtown with a revolving set of roommates, he felt liberated—even if the house gave him mold poisoning, he says, laughing. He met Hartley, now 37, after college, when they were two underbathed artsy guys working at a real-estate firm near the University of Pennsylvania.

The War on Drugs maintains a practice space in Philadelphia, where core members Hartley, Bennett and Hall currently reside. Tomorrow, Granduciel says, he'll rent a car to drop off some gear and clock in a rehearsal before the band debuts new material on national television. It's a little impractical, but keeping a foothold in Philadelphia is more than just an old habit for Granduciel. It has become part of the band's identity and, by extension, his own.



And identity matters to him, no matter how much he hides behind eyelids, hair and reverb. "I wondered if I had lost a little bit of my identity in my music, and how much of my identity is my music?" he says. "What am I in relation to my music? How much of me singing these songs is a character and how much is my real life?"

Moving around seems to have had a sharpening effect on the band's sound. There's a grandeur and a cohesion to A Deeper Understanding that are different from the busy excitement of Lost in the Dream. The album's first official single, "Holding On," sounds as though Granduciel took a glass pipette to "Thunder Road" and transformed it into an energized new beast. Unlike Springsteen's, Granduciel's process doesn't revolve around lyrics. He spends most of his time tinkering with the instrumentation until the timbres start to tell their own story. But to hear Granduciel describe his work, starting with the arrangement is like entering a palace through the back door. Despite the recognition he has gained, he still carries an element of the amateur.

He's still the kid hiding underneath the covers, studying his pain.

The conversation never strays far from Granduciel's tumultuous creative process. "I'm learning that I'm more instinctual than I give myself credit for," he says, shifting his weight in his seat. He listens to his demos over and over, with no great design in mind, waiting for that flicker. "Maybe when I was 24 and all I listened to was 1964 and 1966 Bob Dylan, you'd have someone sitting here trying to create a myth around himself," he says. "But it's like there's

no more myth. We're just out there doing what we do."

Granduciel's intuition yielded his finest new song, "Thinking of a Place." It's the kind he's always wanted to write—a Tom Joad–style solo-trek song, as he describes it—but he says he never could have done it with just pen and paper.

"I can chip away with ease for months at the sonics, and it doesn't get me frustrated. The words, though, I get very frustrated," he says. He improvises off a scratch vocal track, which he describes as "total gibberish," while working on the other arrangements. When it's time to focus on the vocals, he'll return to the demos and "chase the inflections" like an audio Rorschach test. "I'm writing around sounds, if that makes any sense," he says. He pauses for a beat. "You're kind of like, 'Well, it doesn't have to be fuckin' Raymond Carver.'"

That's how "Place" begins. It's hard to believe the exquisite specificity of the first verse came to him on a whim. "I was like, 'Little bend?' I didn't even know what it was," he says. "It was syllables. I did some research on the words little bend, and it turns out it was this beautiful RV park on the banks of the Missouri River. Then it becomes something, like how do I tie this into a story?"

He goes on. "Every song kind of lives in that state for six or seven months, and everything's in flux. Every song has its bit of improvisation."

Where birds above had flown.

So I lied upon the lawn.

He flashes a smile, suddenly aware he's talking too fast. "It's a roundabout way to end up somewhere, but it's what you gotta do, I guess."

On A Deeper Understanding, Granduciel had a writing partner—in spirit, anyway—in Bruce Springsteen. When Granduciel was living in Hollywood in 2015, he rediscovered the 1980 double album The River and recognized the chill of uncertainty in Springsteen's voice as his own.

"It's a record about being 30 years old, watching your friends have kids and families, and thinking, When am I going to enter that part of my life?" he says. "I think that's what I sought, what I was trying to get to on this record. I'm a little older than the Boss was then, but how am I part of this whole thing, you know?"

Granduciel looks up from the table. It's almost time to go home and feed the dog. "I also figured out I could drive from my studio to my house in Hollywood in about one 'The River,'" he notes of the album's title track. His eyes darken to a smile. At the Bowery show, his father wears a nearly identical expression as he shoots an iPhone video from the balcony. He's focusing not on his son onstage but on the crowd below, bobbing and swaying to the music. It's a scene neither could have imagined just a few years ago. And it's a fitting beginning for a new album derived from traveling down—and trusting in—new roads.

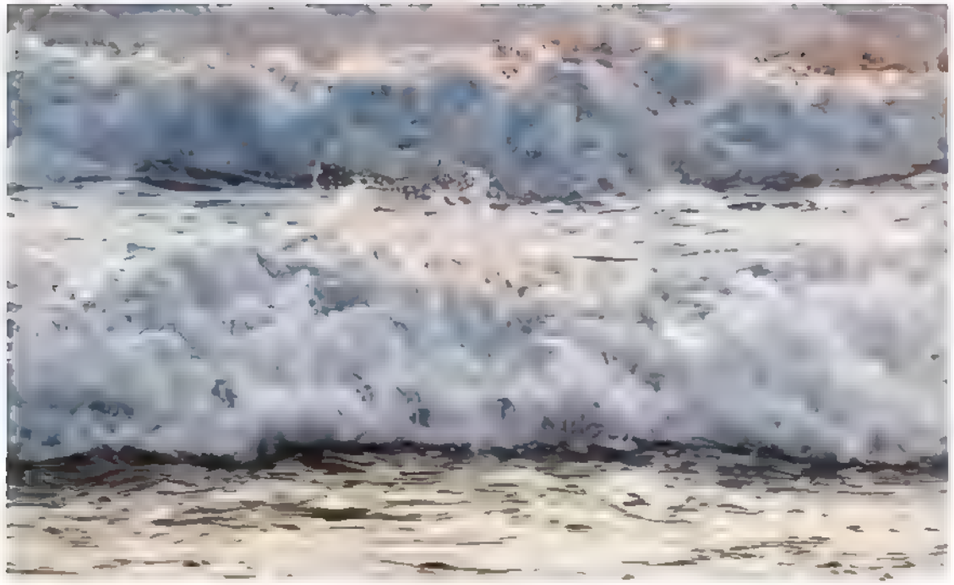
"Seven minutes," says Granduciel. "No traffic. All green lights."

Killer Art for a Good Cause: Swoon's Heliotrope Foundation is a Holiday Gifting Miracle

The socially-minded artist makes a splash with her lat
Heliot
Foundation—a nonprofit using fine art to finance community reli

BY LIZ SUMAN

IMAGE COURTESY HELIOTROPE FOUNDATION



Zana Forman, image courtesy of the Heliotrope Foundation

Caledonia "Swoon" Curry has always taken an interdisciplinary, humanist approach to her creations, and her latest project is no different. The street art darling's nonprofit, the Heliotrope Foundation, has tapped more than 95 artists to create affordable fine art prints for a fundraising initiative conceived to help communities recover from natural disasters and social crises.

One hundred percent of proceeds from the hand-numbered, limited edition "Heliotrope Prints," which go for R925.00 a pop and feature work by Kenny Scharf, Jean Jullien, Molly Crabapple, Shepard Fairey, Ricky Powell, Olek, Swoon and others, benefit post-earthquake Haiti, New Orleans and the Rust Belt town of Braddock, Pennsylvania.

"Inner Workings" by Emilio Perez. Image courtesy of the Heliotrope Foundation

Swoon, a Brooklyn-based mixed-media artist and Jeffrey Deitch mentee, helped elevate street art to new levels of technique and originality by peppering New York City with intricate life-size paper cuts and hand-pulled block prints of people she knows. She released the first installment of the prints in 2012 as an extension of the arts-based community relationships she's cultivated throughout her career.

Swoon says the response from her contemporaries was unexpectedly positive. "Lots of artists started coming out of the woodwork offering to contribute in some way," she says. "It made me understand that the same impulse that urged me to create this kind of project in the first place was very much alive in my fellow artists,

"KNOT" by Rashaad Newsome. Image courtesy of the Heliotrope Foundation

David Cook, image courtesy of the Heliotrope Foundation

no matter their medium or methodology."

The response was so positive, in fact, that Swoon needed an entire nonprofit to streamline and finance her various creative philanthropic efforts. "Our work in Haiti, New Orleans and Braddock evolved to a scale where we had structured goals that needed major fundraising," she explains. "That moment was the basis of the Heliotrope Foundation's inception."

Heliotrope's artist roster has grown exponentially ever since, and now the whimsical wheat-paster best known for populating public spaces with imaginary worlds of paper people is using art to benefit real people on a global scale.

The impact has been multifaceted. "Heliotrope Prints has become a platform where artists can contribute to meaningful outcomes of Heliotrope Foundation projects," says Swoon. At the same time, she adds, "the community has uniquely affordable access to appreciate these artists' work on their walls."

This year's batch of exclusive prints, curated by Molly Krause and out this month, features Rashaad Newsome, Ebony G. Patterson, Kenny Scharf, Aidan Koch, Emilio Perez and Anne Spalter.

Jean Jullien; Image courtesy of the Heliotrope Foundation

Image courtesy of the Heliotrope Foundation

Rachael
CAVALLI

We're happy to have you feature on Playboy! Can you give us a bit of a background on your career as a model and where it all started? t started back in my hometown of ndiana. I started doing modeling g gs near my surrounding area and then I de cided to head to Ca ifornia to pursue my acting and mode ing career. Then it has been uphil from there

Having a full schedule must make it difficult for you to get much alone time, talk to us about the top 3 must-dos to ensure you fit in some well-deserved downtime? I have to say I love CBD bath bombs for an en joyab e re axing bath, some Netflix and chi , and a so some meditation to get any stress away or anxiety away

What does it mean for you to be seen as a strong, intelligent, ambitious woman? That means a ot it he ps me strive for more, to never give up and continue to learn more and more every day

What are some of the biggest misconceptions people have about what you do? th nk peo ple don't th nk it's a real job and somet mes don't take me as serious y but that's why continue to work harder and learn as much as can from different perspec tives

What does freedom of self-expression mean to you? Be ng ab e to express yourse f without judgment and or negative critic sm.

We absolutely love your Instagram, your content is very dynamic, inspirational, and downright sexy, could you perhaps tell us what your personal experience as an influencer has been like? t has been a great ex perience have gotten to interact and met w th so many great people who wou dn't have had the opportunity to do without hav ng an nstagram

3 things that you can't go a day without. can't go without my coffee or matcha atte and ip gloss

What about those crazy DMs you must receive! Care to share a few funny stories regarding those? I just get ots of requests for dating and or marriage, which is kinda funny.

Now we're sure you experience a lot of male attention on and offline, any advice you would like to give to men out there who are hoping to catch your eye the right way? Hope you re ceive a good paycheck because 'm expensive Lol

What is the absolute worst thing a man can do to completely turn you off? Ta k about themse ves the who e time we're together

That said, what advice would you have to give to all women out there when it comes to love and relationships? Wait and don't sett e down right away there's so many interesting peop e in the wor d and there's someone out there just right for you.

Thank you so much for sitting down with us and letting us get to know you! Any last words for our readers out there? Fo ow me on nstagram @officia rachae - cava li Twitter @rachaelcavalli and Onlyfans.com/rachae cava i

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Help Wanted

How Do We Fix Toxic Masculinity?

How a growing network of men's support groups is pushing back against the tide of toxic masculinity

BY **MICKEY RAPKIN** ILLUSTRATION BY **EDEL RODRIGUEZ**

I turn in to the parking lot shortly before seven P.M., though I'm still not sure this is the place. It's been dark for hours and the air is crisp for a December night outside Los Angeles. Finally a text comes through: "Where are you?" That's when I spot them: nine men alone in a public park, standing in a circle.

This may not be Fight Club, but there are definitely rules. First things first: Don't call them "guys." These are not dudes, homeboys or someone's brother from another mother. They're men. The second rule of not–Fight Club: Whatever happens in the park stays in the park. Participants may share lessons learned here with friends outside the circle, but any personal secrets the team members reveal tonight must remain confidential.

Right, team. That's the third rule. "There is a negative connotation to the term support group," says Jason (who asked me not to use his real name). "A support group is a bunch of men making each other feel better. We don't do that. We believe life is better lived as a team sport. We're here to help you do everything you say you want to do." Perhaps he's splitting (receding) hairs, but over the next three hours I'll witness grown men confronting some of their ugliest fears and worst memories. Some will cry. One will reveal a personal secret so dark it feels like an episode of HBO's Room 104.

But first, some context.

These guys—sorry, men—are members of MDI, a nonprofit organization whose stated mission is "to cause greatness by mentoring men to live with excellence and, as mature masculine leaders, create successful families, careers and communities." The credo may be clunky, but the underlying message apparently resonates. MDI (which stands for "Mentor, Discover, Inspire") claims more than 1,000 members across North America, with 101 teams concentrated in major cities including Seattle, San Francisco, Toronto and New York. The organization was founded in the late 1990s, but its mission feels right on time, as we continue to learn that many of our heroes (and Matt Lauer) have been taking their dicks out at work.

MDI's teams host philanthropic events and participate in the occasional overnight retreat, but the weekly team meetings are the organization's raison d'être. Support groups for men to (gulp) talk about their feelings certainly aren't new. Meetup.com, an online platform for finding people with similar interests, lists 360 groups in the United States dedicated to men's support, according to a company spokesperson. That number doesn't include groups such as City Dads that offer camaraderie for men but don't label themselves specifically as support groups. Other organizations where men can hug it out include the ManKind Project, a nonprofit founded in 1984 that claims more than 900 groups across 22 countries. (MDI and groups like it, with their focus on personal growth and respect for all, are a world apart from the so-called men's rights outfits that frequently spout misogyny and often fall on the alt-right end of the spectrum.)

Men basically have to be tricked into seeking help.

Despite a proliferation of available options, men remain unlikely to seek help. Last February, Psychology Today reported on the "silent crisis in men's mental health"—the suicide rate for men is four times higher than for women. The problem has long been culturally entrenched. Fredric Rabinowitz, psychology professor and author of Deepening Psychotherapy With Men, tells me in a phone call, "Men have internal shame for not living up to whatever ideals they imagine they should have achieved—whether it's having enough money, being further along in their careers, providing for their family. Because men mask their emotions, they feel isolated. One of the benefits of the men's group is the relief of finding out you're not the only one who feels shame." Participating in a larger community may explain the popularity of the Movember movement, in which millions of men grow mustaches every November to raise awareness of prostate cancer, testicular cancer and men's health. Because the only thing worse than walking around with a mustache is having to talk about your butthole.

It may seem obvious that men don't like to ask for help, but the problem is so systemic and perplexing that a landmark 2003 study on masculinity and self-help was convened. What two Ph.D.'s determined was that men basically have to be tricked into seeking help by changing "the services to fit the 'average' man." In a way, that's what MDI has been doing. Men may see joining a support group as a sign of weakness, but joining a team? Good talk, coach.

And so, here I am in a parking lot chasing a half-deflated volleyball into the bushes. All MDI team meetings start with a half-hour activity referred to as Fun & Physical. Tonight, these men are playing a modified game of volleyball with wacky rules (you can spike only with your non-dominant hand) and a "net" made from a row of folding chairs. This particular game is called Bro Ball, which is maybe the most embarrassing thing I'll hear tonight, but the rationale tracks. As Abe Moore, a 52-year-old IT specialist, says between rotations, "Fun & Physical allows men to get out of their heads. When you come to a meeting, you're not in a space to open your heart and be present."

I should admit that I came to this story with my own bias. I half suspected the group might be a cult. (Moore says he wondered the same thing at first.) Or that these meetings were for losers who were still sleeping on their moms' couches. Or, worse, that MDI was a place for misguided good ol' boys to talk about how they're the real victims in this whole #MeToo thing. But pretty quickly the men challenged my assumptions.

At 50, Gregor (not his real name) is still boyishly handsome, a successful music producer who has worked alongside Grammy-winning musicians. He isn't someone who looks like he needs a support group. (See? Bias at work.) Gregor came to his first team meeting nearly 10 years ago, he tells me, at the invitation of a dad from his kid's school. He recalls playing soccer that night and admits to some initial misgivings. But he soon discovered something unexpected: The men weren't being coddled. They were being challenged. Gregor was surprised to find himself talking—a lot—about a problem he had at work: He'd promised to collaborate with a friend on a project but no longer had the time, yet his ego wouldn't let him walk away. "There was all this made-up stuff in my head about not letting my friend down," Gregor says. "Within 20 minutes, I had a clear path forward. These men helped me get out of my own way."

I saw similar exchanges at the meeting I attended—exchanges that are best described as men publicly calling each other out on their bullshit. (This

approach may be what separates MDI from more traditional support groups.) I can't reveal details of their discussion, but imagine how it might feel to watch a man admit he hadn't had sex with his wife in months, only to have the team grill him about it.

MDI president Geoff Tomlinson later explains that this technique is intentional. "If you got fired, you'd blame it on your boss being a dick. You'd get a beer with your buddies and they'd pat you on the back and say, 'You'll get a better job tomorrow!' But at your team meeting, you get the opposite experience. If you say you lost your job, they'll say, 'We're sorry that happened, but what part of this core relationship with your boss do you have to own? Let's get to the bottom of this, or you'll be back here in two years.'" It seems to be effective, if not exactly polite. It's been a long time since a fistfight has broken out at an MDI meeting, Tomlinson says, but it has happened. "If someone gets pissed off," he says, "that'll intensify the men coming at him because it's touched a nerve."

Tomlinson should know; he's not only the president of MDI, he's also a client. He joined his first team in Toronto some 20 years ago at the urging of his boss, who suggested the meetings might help him understand why he kept getting passed over for promotions at work. "We remind people: You are the common denominator in your own story," says Tomlinson. Anyone who has ever been in therapy will recognize that phrase. What MDI really offers men is a set of action-oriented tools for personal growth and "teammates" to hold them accountable for their own behavior.

At the L.A. meeting, the elephant in the room is Harvey Weinstein and his abuses of power and the wrongs committed by other prominent men. Gregor is eager to address the subject. "If those men had been on a team," he says, "someone would have been holding them accountable before they hurt somebody. Before it was too late."

The nine men in this group come from diverse backgrounds, but they appear to be unified by the feeling of having missed out on something, be it an essential life lesson, rite of passage or guide to a life well lived. MDI helps them fill in those blanks. A man I'll call Jack (late 50s, blue-collar, works in aeronautics) tells me he came to MDI seven years ago, when his marriage was cratering. Jack had been raised by a father who was physically present but emotionally absent, he says. His father took him camping, but the man never provided guidance. "I was waiting for somebody to tell me what it was to be a man," Jack says, "for someone to say to me, 'These were the rules then, and these are the rules now.'"

It takes balls to be so emotionally naked.

What he found in this circle was a group of men willing to take the time to listen, which is increasingly rare. After he owned up to his own shortcomings ("My wife was bored with me; I needed to grow up"), his MDI team helped him rebuild himself and his confidence. For example, Jack had never been good with money—something he felt ashamed about—so his teammates made him treasurer. Encouraging concrete new life skills is just one way the group helps its members; other ways are more abstract.

Abe—the IT specialist—later shared his own story with me, and it was sobering. He'd never met his father, he says, didn't even know who the man was. Abe's mother had struggled with addiction, and his siblings were in and out of foster care. He came to his first team meeting at the age of 40, shortly after his wife kicked him out. His thought patterns were a cesspool of negativity, steeped over a lifetime of self-hate. "I felt like I'm a piece of shit," he says, "and that because I didn't have a father I couldn't be a good father." He wasn't the type of man to ask for help. But by learning to show up for his teammates, he learned to show up for his wife too. After a year, she invited him home. "Without the team," he says in maybe the most earnest voice I've ever heard in L.A., "I wouldn't be married now."

Time and again I hear a similar refrain: The team saved someone's marriage, financial future, even life. It had helped men quit smoking or watch less porn. Or confront their own fathers, which is the central struggle of basically every male coming-of-age story ever told in this town.

It's a difficult time to be a man in America. Professor Rabinowitz, who has hosted his own men's group meeting for 30 years and has a wait list for new members, says he hasn't seen such an influx of interest since the women's liberation movement sent men scrambling to redefine themselves. The whole thing can be corny as hell: At one point during the MDI meeting I attended, one man stared another dead in the eyes, put his hand on the other man's chest and thanked him for living his truth. But it can also be seriously humbling. It takes balls to be so emotionally naked.

The meeting ends at 10 p.m. with the men shouting their team name, Arrowhead, into the sky like some high school football team. Each team chooses its own name. There's a group in New York, I later find out, that calls itself Massive Dump, a juvenile but funny play on the emotional release one feels after a team meeting. "Arrowhead" is more pointed, so to speak, hinting at the difficult work these team members must do on themselves to become better men as they shed bad habits and work through past trauma. "An arrowhead's razor-sharp edge comes from chipping away at what's not needed," says Gregor.

In our post-Weinstein world, a man's best move may be to shut up and listen. But whether in the White House or working the drive-through at White Castle, it's clear we men have work to do—to chip away at the unnecessary, to craft a better instrument. Go, team.

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